

The University of Chicago

THE RELATION OF THE THEOL-
OGY OF JONATHAN EDWARDS TO
CONTEMPORARY PENOLOGICAL
THEORY AND PRACTICE

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
AND ETHICS

1932

By

GEORGE NOEL MAYHEW

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CHAPTER III

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CHAPTER III

THE PATTERN OF SOVEREIGNTY IN RELATION TO PUNISHMENT

The theology of Jonathan Edwards¹ is cast in the political pattern of sixteenth century monarchy. The relation of God to his world, the status of man, and the means of his redemption are presented in terms of corollaries logically drawn out and developed from the major premise of this pattern. There are certain modifications in the pattern, as used by Edwards, due to the evolution of monarchy itself, but the pattern of political sovereignty applied to God and his relation to the world dominates and gives direction and content to every corollary developed.

Edwards was not content to accept traditional Calvinism, the first great system of theology in protestantism logically and relentlessly developed on the pattern of monarchy; he modified this inheritance so much that in America his school of thought came to bear his name.² The old Calvinism was dead and powerless to produce religious life when Edwards came on the New England theological stage. His great contribution was the restatement of the essentials of Calvinism with a new philosophical foundation in opposition to the rising Arminianism of his day.

I. God the Supreme Object of Devotion and Loyalty

This philosophic foundation was masterfully presented in two essays, titled, "On the Nature of Virtue" and "God's Last End in the Creation,"³ written in the latter years of his life and published posthumously, in 1888.

The Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue is perhaps the greatest single philosophic work produced by Edwards.

¹Jonathan Edwards, 1703-58.

²F. H. Foster, A History of New England Theology (Chicago, 1907), pp. 62-162.

³Works of President Edwards (printed by Baines, pub. Leeds, England, 1806. Eight vols. with two supplementary vols. published Edinburgh, MDCCCLVII), I, p. 86.

It is free from the bias of theological controversy and represents the fruit of a great mind dealing with the complex nature of virtue. In his early years he defined in his "Notes on the Mind," justice as virtuous only when governed by benevolence.⁴ But in his theological work he explored the implications of the political pattern of sovereignty in discussing the justice of God in its application to future punishment and the atonement, and seems to have overlooked this early definition. However in the latter he was theologian and in the former treatise he was philosopher. Relatively speaking as theologian he worked within the Calvinistic mind-set, as philosopher he surveyed with deep insight and understanding the course of ethical theory, pointing out defects of former thinkers and formulating a new theory fruitful at once for ethical thought in general and theology in particular.

The problem Edwards set himself in this dissertation goes back to Hobbes who first brought in the idea of the good as something to be sought but who identified it too closely with pleasure and made the law of the state the only foundation of social morality. The Cambridge Platonists opposed Hobbes emphasizing the eternal distinctions between good and evil, grounding morality more in the objective nature of things. Richard Cumberland clarified the matter further when in 1672 he published a treatise⁵ which built on Hobbes' foundation but eliminated certain errors. He introduces the idea of "the common good" an idea lacking in Hobbes, and reduced all maxims of morality to one general principle, "regard for the common good."⁶ Locke adds to this line of ethical thought the possibility of it becoming one of the demonstrative sciences, like mathematics, if the idea of the Supreme Being and our relation to him were properly carried out. Shaftesbury showed that the social affections are natural and in harmony with self-regarding.⁷ Hutcheson, on the basis of

⁴"Notes on the Mind"

⁵De legibus naturae disquisito philosophica.

⁶See Magoun's account, Bibliotheca Sacra, XLIII, p. 528 and XLIV, pp. 91 ff.

⁷"Hutcheson" by Fowler in Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Shaftesbury's work and with Cumberland's principles erected a moral philosophy which maintained that benevolence was the only ground upon which man approves of any action, consequently benevolence was the sole constituent of virtue.⁸ The moral subject himself is incorporated in the scheme of beings towards whom moral relations are to be sustained. While Edwards is acquainted with the thought of these writers, he makes a different and rather original approach to the problem of virtue.

To Edwards the reason for the nature of the good and the source of obligation was to be found in the fundamental idea of the universe as a "system" whose ideal harmony was the goal of all individual existence, "and hence the reasonable and obligatory object of moral choice." From this viewpoint the nature of virtue and its binding obligation are written in the very nature of man. Virtue is the beauty of those qualities and acts of the mind, that are of a moral nature, not matters of speculation but of the disposition and will, viz. the heart.⁹ But virtue has a beauty which is sometimes particular as over against general beauty. A thing may have a particular beauty

"when considered only with regard to its connection with, and tendency to, some particular thing within a limited, and as it were a private sphere."¹⁰

"A general beauty is that by which a thing appears beautiful when viewed most perfectly, comprehensively and universally, with regard to all its tendencies, and its connections with everything to which it stands related."¹¹

This true and general beauty of the heart most essentially consists of benevolence in general, that is, "consent, propensity, and union of heart to being in general, which is immediately exercised in general good will"¹² After proving that being, simply considered is the object of a truly virtuous benevolence, then

⁸Foster, op. cit. p. 94.

⁹Edwards, op. cit., II, p. 7.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹Ibid., p. 8.

¹²Ibid., p. 8

"that object who has most of being, or has the greatest share of existence, other things being equal, so far as such a being is exhibited to our faculties, will have the greatest share of the propensity and benevolent affection of the heart."¹³

But God, by definition, has the greatest share of existence and therefore is the object of our largest love and affection and therefore true virtue must consist chiefly in the love of God.¹⁴ This treatise performs two major tasks from the viewpoint of Edwards. It grounds morality in religion in the first place, and makes God the supreme goal and ground of good for religion. Religion and morality unite here.¹⁵ While the form of Calvinism is not seen here, its spirit moves here with profound philosophic power.

In his Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World,¹⁶ God as the greatest and most inclusive being is shown to have created the world and all lesser creatures for his own glory. It was only reasonable and natural, that God should express himself in and through his world, and that he should have regard to the highest good and ultimate end which was himself. To regard himself as the end and to create all things with reference to his glory was wholly consistent with the proper respect and regard to that supreme fullness of being which was his. The treatise on the nature of True Virtue gave a philosophical foundation for identifying morality with religion which was identified with God as fullness of being. The nature of God's most comprehensive being, was such as to morally obligate man to regard him as the first and chief object of devotion. While this treatise presented God in the direction of a pantheism, the Dissertation on God's chief End in the Creation of the World, corrects this bias, by presenting a picture of God, who while he is imminent in the universe, still is outside of it

¹³Edwards, op. cit., II, p. 12.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵Foster, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁶Edwards, op. cit., I, pp. 443-535.

also, creating, and directing all things to his own honor and glory. These two works logically go together in forming the foundation stones of Edwards' system.¹⁷ At the close of the latter treatise, the God which Edwards has so ably arrived at by way of philosophy is identified with the God of the Old and New Testaments. On these foundations he is ready now to raise anew the structure of Calvinism.¹⁸

The inspiration for these philosophical writings matured near the close of his life, though given direction by religious experience and inheritance they were precipitated by the general Arminian onslaught on Calvinistic positions which had been dear to him from childhood.¹⁹

II. God the Supreme Sovereign

Edwards' discussion of God's moral government over man²⁰ is developed from and kept well within corollaries abstracted from the pattern of sovereignty.

1. Rules Man the Highest Being of Creation. Sovereignty is best indicated when exercised over the sovereign's most powerful subjects. The glory of God's sovereignty is best seen in his absolute sovereignty over man, the highest species of his creation, made in his own image. In the two treatises on moral government, Edwards is discussing that society which is united to God as its head, and the assumption runs through his thought that without a government providing rewards and penalties, these subjects now bound to God as their head, would rebel. It is an assumption drawn from the pattern of sovereignty, viz. that loyalty to the sovereign is maintained by law and the power to enforce punishment for its infraction.

2. Restrains Him From Human Wickedness. The sovereign may do something towards restraining the wickedness of man by law

¹⁷The two works were first published together. The latter is a logical continuation of the former.

¹⁸These were written near the close of his life to give a better foundation for Calvinism.

¹⁹Edwards, op. cit., I, p. 29 and p. 37.

²⁰The Medium of Moral Government, Works, VIII, pp. 235-259. Of God's Moral Government, Ibid., pp. 333-348.

and punishment, but only the transcendentalized law and its penalties can restrain the consciences and lusts of man. Here is a glorified sovereignty with all its implements of coercion transferred to heaven, and exercised with inexorable punitive justice.²¹ His thought here is such as to place God under moral obligation to become this kind of Ruler and Judge because he is supreme to all others and consequently better able to rule.

3. Uses Man to His Own Honor and Glory. God is related to the moral government of the world by the fact that man his highest creation, is for his own honor and glory and he must give direction to his conduct to this end, and punish consequently, tendencies in other directions, as depriving God of the honor due him from his subjects.

4. Exacts Full and Unqualified Obedience. The capacity for intercourse on the part of man with his Creator is made analogous to the close relationship of the loyal subject to his sovereign. They can discourse together because of this loyalty of subject to his sovereign. The subject yields himself to and complies with the sovereign's will. Intercourse between God and man has been expressed in the precise terms of the sovereign pattern. For the slightest infringement of law or honor, the subject is not only excluded but punished by his sovereign. So is the relation of God to man represented here.

5. Reveals Perfect Law and Government. No monarch could ethically expect his subjects to obey a law which had not been made known to them. He is under moral obligation to promulgate to the understanding of his subjects those methods, rules and enforcements which he has set for the ordering of his government. The sovereign is not only under obligation to make known his laws, but the punishments provided for their infraction and rewards for their observance. The obligation of God towards the subjects under his moral government is made exactly analogous to this relationship of sovereignty.

6. Denies Recognition to Rebellious Subjects. Furthermore, it is not only requisite that the sovereign make known his laws and penalties involved in their infraction, to his loyal subjects, but to communicate to them the aim and the end he has in

²¹Edwards, op. cit., VII, p. 521.

mind for them, so that their loyalty may not be blind, but inspired with appreciation for their sovereign's aims. This desirable aspect of political sovereignty is carried over into theology by Edwards in an effort to make intelligible the reason why God should communicate his mind to his subjects.

Finally, these several analogies of God's relationship to moral government in terms of the monarchical pattern are limited to the relation of sovereignty to loyal subjects. The aspects of rulership, judgeship and the giving of law in this transcendental political scheme, has already been discussed.

Every corollary and every analogy deduced or developed, proceeds from the major premise set by the pattern of sovereignty. God is developed as the fullness of being, worthy of man's most benevolent devotion and goodwill. Man himself was created for the honor and glory of God. His functional relationships to man and his world developed in terms of transcendentalized political functions, his subjects live and die to his honor and glory and those who rebel against him, are judged and condemned with an inexorable penalty worthy of the honor and dignity of his sovereignty and the infinite demerit of the act of rebellion on the part of man. God is omnipotent to maintain his sovereignty against all possible opposition and the means he has adopted to intimidate rebellion and secure obedience is the terror of punishment. He is possessed of omnipotent power with which to maintain his position of sovereignty and to enforce his law. Since all creatures derive from him, since he gave for them the perfect law, he is also in position to judge and to enforce the penalty of satisfaction suitable to each offense, therefore he is the perfect and supreme Judge.

These functions of God as Ruler, Lawgiver, and Judge, are corollaries of political sovereignty developed logically and consistently to a transcendental state. As Ruler or Rector he maintains the sovereign dignity of law and government; as lawgiver he provides a perfect law for the ordering of all things and as judge he imposes and executes sentence on all infractions of his law according to rule.

III. The Moral Nature of God's Government.

1. Governor supremely concerned about man. Edwards' theology follows the implications of the sovereign pattern in

presenting God's relationship to his subjects under a moral government. God who created the world is doubtless also the Governor of it, is able to dispose of it as he pleases. God being intelligent had some purpose in creating the world,²² and will see that it serves his purpose. If God is concerned about the government of his whole creation, he will be especially concerned about mankind, the principal part of his visible creation.²³ His concern for beauty and harmony in other parts of creation is evidence that he will not leave "the principal part of creation" in "a state of deformity, discord, and the most hateful and dreadful confusion."²⁴ God made mankind superior in his creation and he is concerned about regulating that which he values most in men, viz. "what appertains to his intelligence and voluntary acts." Man differs from the lower creation only in intelligent perception and action. Hence it must be that God takes care that a good moral government should be maintained over men, that his intelligent, voluntary acts should be subject to rules and that he should be subject to judicial proceeding, with respect to them all. Unless this be true, the world of mankind, instead of being superior, will be the most deplorable of all creation, for having the faculties of reason and will.²⁵

"And the God of order, peace, and harmony, will appear to have left this chief part of his work, and the end of all the rest, to the reign of everlasting discord, confusion and ruin; contradicting and conflicting with its own nature and faculties; having reason, and yet acting in all things contrary to it; being men, but yet beasts; setting sense above reason; improving reason only as a weapon of mischief and destruction of God's workmanship."²⁶

The Creator's interest in moral government is evidenced by the fact that throughout the world, among nations, cities, and

²²Edwards, op. cit., VIII, p. 333.

²³Ibid., p. 334.

²⁴Ibid., p. 335.

²⁵Ibid., p. 335.

²⁶Ibid., p. 336.

families there is a semblance of moral government, without which society could not exist. This was intended for the preservation of man, the highest species of creatures. Since there is moral subordination amongst men to heads such as princes and governors, it is reasonable to suppose that God will exercise a moral government over all.

"If men have nothing but human government to be a restraint upon their lusts, and have no rule of judgment of an universal omniscient Governor to be a restraint upon their consciences, still they are left in a most woeful condition."

....Since some men, with only a shadow of the power and greatness of God, exercise power over men by issuing edicts and executing judgment, it would be strange if God who has infinitely the greatest right to exercise the power of a moral governor, should refrain from so doing. In our world the wiser and stronger have been set by God as rulers over the less-knowing and the weaker. It is more worthy that God who made all, sustains and preserves all, should with his great wisdom maintain a moral government over men who are so weak and less-wise compared to him.²⁷

2. Necessity that Subjects Understand Their Creator. Man is not capable of holding his Creator in the proper esteem without knowledge of him. And God cannot be indifferent or agreeable alike to man's esteem, love, honor, and gratitude or man's enmity and hatred.²⁸ Opposition to God's will cannot be as agreeable to him as compliance. He cannot be indifferent in such matters, then he will not act as such, therefore he must maintain a moral government over mankind.²⁹ Since God made the lower order of things to subserve the needs of man, he made man to subserve a greater end. Since God discovers to man the ends for which he has made other things it would be strange if he did not let man know the end for which he himself was made, and given such distinguishing faculties, whereby he is set above other parts of

²⁷Edwards, op. cit., VIII, p. 337.

²⁸Ibid., p. 338.

²⁹Ibid., p. 339.

creation. Therefore in the exercise of these superior faculties man must fall in line with the known design of the Creator in giving them or thwarting it. He must ally or oppose himself to the ends of the Creator. God cannot be indifferent in the face of this and therefore must maintain moral government over mankind.

The special faculties given man not only separate him from brute creation, they endow him with capacity for intercourse with the Creator, as intelligent and voluntary agents.³⁰ Hence it is certain that mankind is subject to God's moral Government, because there can be no such thing as a communication between God and man, as between intelligent, voluntary agents, without moral government.

"For in maintaining communication or converse, one must yield to the other, must comply to the other; there must be union of wills; one must be clothed with authority the other with submission."³¹

If man the subject converses with God the sovereign, he must do so with due respect and honor to the moral demands of his government. Only loyal subjects are admitted to this intercourse.

3. Nature of Government Requires it to be Declared Open and Visible. The nature of this moral government, to which God is united as head requires that it should be declared, open and visible.³²

"How can any moral government be properly and sufficiently established and maintained in a kingdom of intelligent agents, consisting in exhibiting, prescribing and enforcing methods, rules, and ends of their own voluntary actions, without declaring, and particularly promulgating to their understandings, those methods, rules, and enforcements?"³³

In order to properly have a moral government, it is necessary for the ruler to enforce the rules of the society, "by threatening

³⁰Edwards, op. cit., VIII, p. 341.

³¹Ibid., p. 341.

³²Ibid., p. 236.

³³Ibid., p. 236.

just punishments and promising the most suitable and wise rewards." But for this there must be a declaration of threats and promises.

4. Government Based on Understanding Between Ruler and Ruled. In a moral government, involving real union between the head and the members, there should be conversation between the governors and the governed.³⁴ Law cannot affect the will except in so far as it may be known and therefore if the governor is sovereign in the government it behooves him to make explicit to his subjects the law and the penalties consequent to their infraction. It is requisite that the subject should know the mind of the sovereign relative to the aim and end he has in mind for his subjects. Despite the fact that nature furnishes for man much evidence of God, it is needful that God make himself better known through a revelation.³⁵ Converse between God the Ruler and man the ruled is necessary because both are moral agents, and the moral world is a conversible world.³⁶ The very ground of moral behaviour, and moral government and regulation, is society, or mutual intercourse and social regards. The medium of union and communion of society is conversation. The felicity of friendship is tasted and enjoyed through conversation.

"The happiness of God's moral kingdom consists, in an inferior degree, in the members' enjoyment of each others' friendship; but infinitely more in the enjoyment of the head."³⁷

5. Understanding Provided by God Through His Word and Man Through Prayer. Consequently conversation between God and his subjects is supremely important. God maintains on his part, this conversation by his word while man's part of the conversation is maintained through prayer.³⁸ By the former God speaks his mind and by the latter man expresses his mind to God. It follows that the friendship and felicity which man is to enjoy with God the moral head, in the next world, begins here. The need and necessity of conversation to support and carry on the

³⁴Edwards, op. cit., VIII, p. 237.

³⁵Ibid., p. 238.

³⁶Ibid., p. 239.

³⁷Ibid., p. 240.

³⁸Ibid., p. 240.

concerns of society, appears by considering the need of it for answering all the purposes of friendship.³⁹ The nature of friendship itself predisposes towards revelation of goods valuable to those involved in the friendship. Just as in human kingdoms, the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of the administration is properly made visible in order to encourage and animate the subjects and for the satisfaction and benefit of the whole society of intelligent agents, so with the moral government of God. It is becoming to the active and rational nature of subjects to know the general end, viz. the public good, as well as the design of the principal parts of the administration, such as wars, treaties, and changes in affairs of the kingdom. Without knowledge of these things the subjects are without opportunity to consent, concur, approve or disapprove, to rejoice in the wisdom and benefit of the administration and to pay proper regard to those who have charge of the government.⁴⁰ Divine history and prophecy serve God's moral government in this respect. Without these man cannot see the effects and success of his administration.

Edwards objects to the claim that reason, the light of nature, without revelation is sufficient to show us that the end of God's government in his moral kingdom is to promote virtue and happiness, for the reason that wickedness hitherto has so generally prevailed, and in the greater part of the world, and that calamities, miseries, and death so general have no prophecies of better times in the latter ages of the world.

When faced with the objection, that God maintains a moral government, but without a revelation to a greater part of the world, and therefore that he judges for himself and acts according to his judgment, Edwards replies, that he is speaking of God's moral government over a society of agents, a society that has God for their King, united to them as the Head of the society; as it

"is with earthly kings with respect to their own kingdoms, where the union between king and subjects is not broken and

³⁹Edwards, op. cit., VIII, p. 241.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 242.

dissolved; and not a society or country of rebels, who have forsaken their lawful sovereign, withdrawn themselves from subjection to him, and cast off his government: though they may still be under the kings' power, and moral dominion, in some sense, as he may have it in his power and design, to conquer, subdue, judge and punish them for their rebellion."⁴¹
 But the sense in which such a nation is said to be under the moral government of its king, and may be said to be his people is quite different from that of a kingdom remaining in union with their king.

Society, as used by Edwards here, ceases in case the subjects rebel against their sovereign. One who rebels against the moral government of God is without the pale of conversation. "Moral government in society is a social affair." There is intercourse between superior and inferior. In the case of rebellious subjects, it is sufficient that the rebel people have "means of knowing the end of their rebellion, and that it is their duty to be subject to their king, to seek reconciliation with him, and to inquire after his will."⁴²

Edwards is following through here the analogy of a glorified monarchy. Just as a monarch would not communicate to rebel subjects his designs, purposes and benefits of government, so will not God to sinners, as long as they remain obstinate and in rebellion. Like the monarch he will not publish to them ways and terms of reconciliation or converse with them as friend, although it is requisite that he publish his judgment and condemnation against them.⁴³

IV. The Relationship of God to Subjects the Logic of Political Patterns

Edwards' early religious experience predisposed the direction of his thought towards the central doctrine of calvinism, the sovereignty of God. His theology was developed along the lines of corollaries drawn from two political patterns of sovereignty. One of these patterns was abstracted from feudalism and served to throw in bold relief the infinite dignity and worth of

⁴¹ Edwards, op. cit., VIII, p. 244.

⁴² Ibid., p. 245.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 245.

God compared to man while the other was abstracted from the political monarchies which arose in Europe in the sixteenth century, served to enhance the dignity and authority of the law formulated by the sovereign God for his subjects. The significance of corollaries drawn from these political patterns, in the theology of Edwards, is indicated by the social forces which gave rise and direction to the two types of political states.

Feudalism arose out of the ruins of the civilization of the Roman empire, which was disintegrated by the armed immigration of northern tribes. The arts and commerce, the law and political ideas of the Roman empire disappeared before these new conquerors, who knew and cared nothing for Roman political ideas and institutions. With the reversion of society to an almost savage state, the reordering of society began under the military control of stronger soldiers. These stronger soldiers seized land on which they allowed weaker soldiers to live in return for stipulated services. Thus without taxes or courts or government in the proper sense of the term there emerged out of the chaos of the seventh and eighth centuries a large number of feudal centers in which the relationship of the higher lord to the lower lord was a combination of landlord, military commander, and guardian. The exercise of control depended in the long run on the ability of the lord to maintain his status as superior to the lesser lord or vassal. Of paramount importance in the feudal system was the recognition of the relative honor or dignity "of the parties who entered into the feudal relationship."

The new controls for society, which grew up as a result of military dominance by chieftains, rested on a hierarchy of masters, the strongest lord or king at the top, the lesser or vassal lords below, and at the bottom the serfs for whose labors very limited rights, and protection from enemies, were granted by the lords. Obedience was the correlate of protection all the way through the hierarchy from the serf to the highest lord.

1. Feudal Pattern. From this feudal type of society arose a new penology based on the rank of the offender and the rank of the offended. A crime was judged not on its intrinsic merit, as between two individuals of equal rank before the law, but on the merit of the relative rank of the parties involved. A crime against a fellow serf drew one penalty, but the same crime

perpetrated by a serf against his lord, drew a much heavier penalty because of the rank involved. This conception was carried over into theology by Anselm and is used by Jonathan Edwards quite often in his theology, as will appear later in this study.

2. Pattern of Monarchy. But the theology of Edwards is developed along the line of corollaries drawn even more from the pattern of monarchy, the political successor of feudalism. Feudalism proved itself inadequate for the new social, intellectual, and commercial activities of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. The dominantly creative forces were economic. These economic interests became identified with the rising cities, legal uniformity enforced by central authority and a bourgeois class, as over against the disunity and non-participation of the feudal classes in the economic life.⁴⁴ The territorial magnate tended to displace the private landlord and to become subject to public law.⁴⁵ These newer forces moved in the direction of establishing new political institutions in which sovereignty and law became the two foci of politics

"and punishment in the name of the sovereign and the law was that upon which social order had to rely. As in feudalism the political structure could not endure if the lower classes ceased to recognize the larger honor of the higher and the higher could not enforce satisfaction for injury to their honor, so in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries no government could be thought of as maintaining itself if the sovereign lost his power to enforce his laws by punishment."⁴⁶

Sovereignty implied ability on the part of the sovereign to maintain respect for his laws through punishing their violation. Hence justice became identified with punishment. The failure to punish infractions of the law might indicate the inability of the sovereign to maintain his law while on the other hand it might argue that the sovereign had no regard for his law and was in this way undermining his authority. Within such a pattern, the punitive justice of God became his chief characteristic. The monarchy of this period invested the sovereign with an

⁴⁴Franz Oppenheimer, The State, trans. John M. Gitterman (1914), pp. 222-223, 227, 231

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 233, 235, 238, 241, 243.

⁴⁶Shailer Mathews, The Atonement and the Social Process (New York, 1930), p. 119.

absoluteness unquestioned. The theology of Jonathan Edwards illustrates admirably the logical and consistent application of the thought-pattern of political monarchy to theology in relation to the problem of punishment.

V. Punitive Justice of God a Deduction From the Pattern of Political Sovereignty

Having adopted the political pattern of monarchy Edwards pursues relentlessly the logic of the various corollaries deduced therefrom relative to every expression and form of opposition by man to the sovereignty of God. God defends his sovereign law and rights for exactly the same reasons given by an earthly monarch, with the exception that whereas the earthly sovereign may err or provide a law which is imperfect, the sovereignty of God is exercised in the fullness of perfection and power unknown to mundane creatures.

The punishment of the sinner by the sovereign God is rationalized on the pattern of the political monarchy. In this transcendentalized state God's sovereignty is related to punishment, and explained by corollaries deduced from political sovereignty as the following argument, outlined in the main in the essay, the "Necessity and Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine of Satisfaction for Sin," will show.⁴⁷ The nature of sovereignty and of law prescribes the bounds within which God is logically compelled to act with reference to rebellious subjects.

1. Sin as Rebellion Against the Sovereign. In the first place sin is rebellion against God. Sin strikes at God and man, but especially at God.⁴⁸

"For it belongs to God, as the Supreme Ruler of the Universality of things, to maintain order and decorum in his kingdom, and to see to it that decency and righteousness take place in all cases."⁴⁹

While admitting that "all sin originally comes from a defective or private cause" man is not to be excused on this account.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Edwards, op. cit., VIII, pp. 500-535.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 502.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 503.

⁵⁰ Ibid., II, p. 103 and p. 116.

Satan attempted to usurp the throne and set himself up as God. To this end he introduced sin into the world and corrupted man, and made him God's enemy.⁵¹ Therefore "natural man" entertains low and contemptible thoughts of God. "They are enemies in the natural relish of their souls."⁵² They dislike God although they are really ignorant of him. Their wills are contrary to God's will. "They are very opposite to the commands of God."⁵³ Hence natural men are enemies to God's government. They are not loyal subjects, but enemies to God's authority.⁵⁴ They are at enmity with God in their affections and in their practices. While God cannot be injured by them because of his superiority, yet they are at war with him. "They list under Satan's banner, and are his willing soldiers in opposing the kingdom of God."⁵⁵ This natural man in rebellion against God is totally depraved, in every part, in all his faculties. His senses, seeing, hearing and tasting are only outlets and inlets of sin, channels of corruption. These are the seeds of the greatest and blackest crimes.⁵⁶

2. Punishment of Rebellion the Obligation of Sovereignty. Man as sinner, presented in terms of a rebellious subject under the sovereignty of God, results from a corollary drawn from the pattern of political sovereignty. Now the relation of God to the sinner follows another corollary drawn from this pattern. He acts toward him as the political monarch acts towards his subjects who refuse obedience to his laws, and for the same reasons. Sovereignty means nothing without the right and power to enforce that sovereignty. Law is prescribed for the subject, the disregard of which involves a wrong and therefore punishment. Therefore

"the sacredness of the authority of the Divine Lawgiver requires, that he should maintain and fulfill his law, when it

⁵¹ Edwards, op. cit., V, p. 19.

⁵² Ibid., p. 310.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 311.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 311.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 312.

⁵⁶ Ibid., VI, pp. 396-7; X, p. 115.

is violated by a rebellious subject."⁵⁷

The majesty of government impresses the subject with reverence and awe for its laws and demands, so must majesty in the government of God inspire respect.

"The majesty of a ruler consists very much in that which appears in him; that tends to strike the subject with reverence and awe, and dread of contempt of him or rebellion against him."⁵⁸

In this transcendentalized monarchy the law is perfectly righteous and therefore the very nature of that law demands that its honor be maintained by strict enforcement. It is not proper that such a law give place to rebellion which dishonors both the law and the lawgiver and wrongs the public good, "of which the Supreme Rector of the world has the care and is the guardian."⁵⁹

Edwards reaffirmed the central doctrine of Calvinism, the sovereignty of God and with it the dignity of his law. The Anselmic conception of sin as the violation of private right and honor is interwoven with the Grotian conception of sin as the violation of the dignity and authority of law.⁶⁰ The theology of Edwards deals with the whole problem of punishment from the viewpoint of the sovereignty of God, in the direction of Anselmic conceptions or from the viewpoint of the sovereign dignity of law and government which was Grotian in outlook.⁶¹

3. Sovereignty of God Exercised by Law. The nature of sovereignty and law prescribe their relation to all forms of opposition in terms of punishment. Justice equates every wrong with suitable punishment, and sovereignty is sovereign only so long as it is able to maintain itself supreme in the face of every opposition. God is the transcendentalized sovereign of the world. He is a being of infinite loveliness, greatness, majesty and glory and therefore infinitely honorable.

⁵⁷Edwards, op. cit., VI, p. 510.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 510.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰G. B. Stevens, The Christian Doctrine of Salvation (New York, 1905), p. 164.

⁶¹The Anselmic conception tended to justify punishment on the ranking dignity and honor of God, the Grotian on the Law.

"He is infinitely exalted above the greatest potentates of the earth, and the highest angels in heaven; and therefore he is infinitely more honorable than they. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong; for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed himself, and we have an absolute, universal and infinite dependence upon him."⁶²

Such a sovereign cannot consistently allow sin, an infinitely detestable pollution, to appear in the world subject to his government, without making opposition to it, or in some way giving public manifestations of his infinite abhorrence to it.⁶³ His displeasure towards sin is best manifested by vengeance.⁶⁴

4. God the Sovereign of a Moral and Natural Government. But God is the sovereign of a Moral government which consists of the giving of laws and of judging.⁶⁵ The laws are given to prevent sin and consequently the Supreme Rector cannot allow his rule to give place to the rebellion of the sinner. The rectitude of this great and good rule by the Supreme Lawgiver, established for the regulation of the Commonwealth of moral agents; its universal fitness and wisdom, and absolute perfection, "render a partial abrogation, for the sake of them that dislike it, and will not submit to it, needless and unseemly."⁶⁶

5. Subjects Wholly Dependent Upon God. God has a right to the character of Supreme Ruler, by virtue of the derivation of all creatures from him and their dependence on him for their being and for their good so that they are properly his possession. For this reason he has a right to judge their action and conduct and to fulfill the sanction of his law. Since his right to give laws is an independent right, he has the same right to judge those to whom the laws are given. It is necessary that there be a judge of reasonable creatures and sanctions, or re-

⁶²Edwards, op. cit., VI, p. 395.

⁶³Ibid., VIII, p. 504.

⁶⁴Ibid. 504.

⁶⁵Ibid., IV, p. 446.

⁶⁶Ibid., VIII, p. 509.

wards and punishments, "annexed to rules of conduct which are necessary to the being of laws. A person may instruct another without sanctions, but not give laws."⁶⁷ Just as the monarch or the sovereign law is compelled to judge by rule so must God judge by law, "for the very notion of judging, is to determine whether the object of judgment be according to rule."⁶⁸

"Therefore when God acts as judge he will not because of the law justify the wicked, and cannot clear the guilty, and, by parity of reason, cannot justify without righteousness."

While God is the supreme and perfect Ruler of heaven and earth, the supreme and perfect lawgiver, he is also the supreme and perfect judge. Earthly judges do not always have the power to enforce their decisions but not so with this transcendentalized judge of heaven and earth. He has power to vindicate his right. His power can neither be disputed nor controlled. Omnipotent, he maintains his dominion over both the natural and the moral world. Men may refuse subjection to him as lawgiver, yet they cannot escape the equating sentence of judgment which he will pass upon them.

6. Penalty Heaviest on Rebellion Against Sovereignty. The sovereignty exercised in the name of the king or his law involves dire penalties for offenders, particularly when the injury strikes at sovereignty itself. It is the same with God.

"The foundation of the sinner's fear and distress is the justice and the law of God; they are against him and they are unalterable, they must have their course; heaven and earth shall be destroyed, rather than justice should not take place; there is no possibility of sin escaping justice."⁶⁹

All creatures derive from God and depend upon him for their being and their good, therefore he has the right to rule his own possession as Ruler. He has the concern and care of the government of both the moral and natural world and has promulgated a perfect law for each, therefore he is the perfect law-

⁶⁷Edwards, op. cit., VIII, p. 509.

⁶⁸Ibid., VI, p. 284.

⁶⁹Ibid., X, p. 428.

giver.

VI. Relation of the Punitive Justice of God to Contemporary Penology

1. Concept of Justice Abstract and Legalistic. The punitive justice of God was a logical deduction from the assumption that God was an absolute sovereign. The pattern of absolute sovereignty applied to God's relation to the world was significant only so long as absolute sovereignty was vital and creative for the political state. When the axiomatic assumptions on which sovereignty rested began to weaken, because of the new social, economic and political forces, any attempt to explain God in terms of the old pattern, clashed with these newer forces and their underlying assumptions. Basic to feudalism with its hierarchy of masters, was a landed aristocracy. But as feudalism began to disintegrate under the newer social and economic forces which created mobile wealth in opposition to land-wealth, the need of universal laws under a central government became basic. The feudal land-aristocrat was challenged by the territorial magnate who triumphed by the aid of law and power of central government. Politically the creative forces moved in the direction of absolute monarchy, the successor of feudalism. It was natural and inevitable that men should in this period think of the government of God in terms of human government which was constructive and creative for their time. Calvinism adopted the mind-set of monarchy which was vital and powerful for theology until the axioms of political monarchy began to be questioned. The punitive justice of God the transcendentalized sovereign was an inevitable corollary of political sovereignty. It was impossible to avoid punitive justice as an attribute of God if one accepted him as an absolute sovereign. God was sovereign by definition and analogy. Therefore his attributes were not subject to experience but became the product of abstraction and legal deductions.

2. Concept Opposed by Contemporary Social Forces. The concept of absolute sovereignty became bankrupt in the eighteenth century. In England government had become constitutional and parliament represented the rights of the subjects in the sovereign government. The people had demanded and received at the hands of their heretofore absolute lords, concessions and rights

in the frame-work of governmental sovereignty.

The precursors of the French Revolution influenced thought in both England and America. Rousseau (1712-78) was a pioneer of the Romantic movement, preaching a return to Nature creed. He proclaimed the rights of the individual, revolted against artificial civilization and rules and schools. He formulated the contract theory reflected almost immediately in both religion and politics and taught that government depended on the consent of the people. Contemporaneous with Rousseau was Montesquieu (1689-1755) who with Voltaire (1694-1778) expressed the vague feelings of the under classes. Montesquieu's influence was significant in the political thought of America.⁷⁰

In England, Bacon (1561-1626), Descartes (1596-1650), Hume (1711-1776), and Locke (1632-1704) and many others were turning to nature and the individual and away from the supernatural and the otherworldly. These tendencies were destined ultimately to undermine the supreme importance attached to theological speculation and to elevate and enhance the dignity of man. The concept of sovereignty was modified in France, England and America, both in theory and practice. This change in the content of political sovereignty tended more and more to invalidate the absolute sovereignty of God and with it the punitive justice of God. In the democratic process penology was to become less legalistic and forensic and more redemptive. Edwards carries the punitive justice of God to a greater logical extreme in elevating to still higher heights the absolute sovereignty of God, and consequently in opposition to the more humane and merciful penology dawning in his day.

The punitive justice of God was not mere abstract theory with these Calvinists as the history of their treatment of wrong-doers will show. The stern and inevitable justice of God to his subjects certainly gave support and direction to a penology which was stern and severe towards the citizen-subjects of the earthly theocracy.

The first penal code adopted by the colonists of New England (Puritan) in 1642 was unusually severe, containing

⁷⁰ P. M. Buck, Social Forces in Modern Literature (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1913), p. 50.

twelve capital offenses. A few years later additional laws were added dealing most rigorously with heresy prescribing banishment or execution for the convicted.⁷¹ Severe penal laws were enacted by the Calvinists in the New World after the settlement in New England. The early element of East Jersey came from New England, England and Scotland and their first penal code is an almost verbatim copy of the New Haven code referred to above.⁷² Puritanism in penal law was reactionary. It is only fair to observe that Puritan penal codes in the New World were not as severe as the penal law of their time left behind in the Old World. But in contrast to other religious groups living in America at the time of Edwards, their penal law was very severe.

Sternness and severity was the logic of their religious mind-set. For precedent they looked to the Old Testament first of all, therefore in the spirit of lex talonis and not in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount did they dispense justice. Punishment was corporal almost exclusively while among the Quakers it was mild in the first place and in the second reformatory. With the Puritans justice was legal and forensic dictated by the logic of sovereignty while with many of their religious neighbors it was humane and redemptive, dictated by the needs of human life. The logic of Edwards' mind-set was against the best penology of his time.

⁷¹The Colonial Laws of Mass. Reprint of Edition of 1660, p. 154. Also the Public Records of the Colony of Conn. Edited by J. H. Trumbull, pp. 77-88.

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H. E. Barnes, History of New Jersey Penal Institutions (Trenton, New Jersey, 1918), p. 27.

